a) transmitting a data packet from said one unit to said base station during a first time period selected by the unit;

b) receiving at said one unit from said base station a reply signal during a second time period occurring only during a selected time window after said first time period, said second time period being the same for at least some of said units.--

2 1
~~26.~~ A method according to claim ~~25~~ wherein said steps of transmitting and receiving are by spread spectrum RF signals.

3 1
~~27.~~ A method according to claim ~~25~~ wherein said remote terminal unit is one of a plurality of remote stations associated with the transmitter of said reply signal.

3 Cont.

4 3
~~28.~~ A method according to claim ~~27~~ wherein said remote stations are hand-held data-gathering units which include manual control elements, and wherein at least some of said remote stations include bar-code reading devices.

5 1
~~29.~~ A method according to claim ~~25~~ wherein said reply signal is transmitted by a second station which is one of a plurality of said second stations physically spaced from one another, and there are a plurality of said remote terminal units for each said second station.

6 1
~~30.~~ A method according to claim ~~25~~ including the step of listening at said unit prior to said step of transmitting said data packet to see if other like units are transmitting.

7
~~31.~~ A system for transmitting data packets from one of a plurality of first stations to a second station, comprising:

a) a transmitter in said one first station for transmitting a data packet from said one first station to the second station during a first time period selected by said one first station;

b) a receiver in said one first station for receiving a reply signal from the second station during a second time period occurring only in a time window referenced to said first time period by a selected delay, said selected delay being the same for all said plurality of first stations.

8 7
~~32.~~ A system according to claim ~~31~~ wherein said transmitter and receiver employ spread spectrum RF signals.

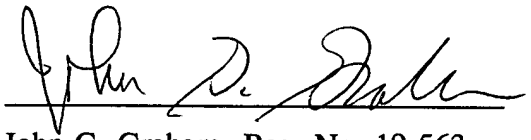
9 7
~~33.~~ A system according to claim ~~31~~ wherein said first station is one of a plurality of remote stations associated with a transmitter of said reply signal.

10 9
~~34.~~ A system according to claim ~~33~~ wherein said remote stations are hand-held data-gathering units which include manual control elements, and wherein at least some of said remote stations include bar-code reading devices.

11 7
~~35.~~ A system according to claim ~~31~~ wherein said reply signal is transmitted by a second station which is one of a plurality of said second stations physically spaced from one another, and there are a plurality of said first stations for each said second station.

12 7
~~36.~~ A method according to claim ~~31~~ including means for listening at said first station prior to said transmitting said data packet to see if other like units are transmitting.

Respectfully submitted,



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